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ABSTRACT

This study attempted to find reasons for the large proportion of dropouts in the federal government's National Summer Youth Sports Program. Selected scales of the Jesness Inventory were administered (value orientation, alienation, denial, and occupational aspiration) at the beginning of the program to 66 11-year-old boys enrolled in a 1971 program at a large southwestern university. Measures of occupational aspiration were taken by categorizing responses to open-ended questions, in accordance with Hollingshead's Two-Factor-Index of Social Position scale. A large proportion of this sample were either Mexican-American in origin or black. The students constituted the entire population of 11-year-olds in the program (males). The data were analyzed using an IBM 36-65 computer. Step-wise multiple discriminant analysis was performed to test the hypothesis that boys who fail to complete the program have a more delinquent psychosocial profile than boys who complete the program. Group 1, those who completed the program, was composed of 27 boys; Group 2, those who failed to complete the program, was composed of 39 boys. Analysis of data supported the hypothesis. The conclusion that the problem lies in the psychological characteristics of the participants is not entirely satisfactory. The use of team sports in the program might result in alienation of the participants on a smaller scale similar to the alienation they experience in the larger social-cultural system. (JA)

Psychosocial Profiles of Delinquent and Nondelinquent Participants in a Sports Program*

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Introduction

In the last few years, the Federal Government has been investing substantial amounts of money in a nationwide, annually held sports program known as The National Summer Youth Sports Program. The program caters to boys and girls aged 10-18 years, who come primarily from areas which have been defined by the Office of Economic Opportunity as being economically underprivileged. For various social, economic and psychological reasons, a number of the participants in these programs have delinquent backgrounds, and a few come from either broken homes, or from homes where the father has been, or is institutionalized.

The broad aim of the program is to enhance the social development of these youngsters, by providing a structured, but playful physical activity environment consisting of a number of sports. In practice, team sports appear to be the most common activity offered in such programs. In adition, the participants receive a hot lunch daily, as well as a free medical check-up. Talks, films, and excursions are additional features of the program.

While those boys and girls who remain in the program report

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favorably on the experience, a large proportion drops out of the program. Figures vary from area to area, but drop-out rates of up to 60% with some age groups have been reported. While this may be partly attributed to natural attrition factors, the preponderance of this phenomenon suggested that, perhaps, an alternative explanation should also be sought. In this study, therefore, two lines of investigation were pursued. One focused on the nature of the program, its structure, and the possible "holding influence" that this may have had on the participants. The second (which is the main concern of this investigation) focused on the psychosocial characteristics of the participants, for the purpose of identifying possible differences between the two groups, that is to say, boys who completed the program and boys who did not.

Purpose of the Study

In view of the scarcity of related literature in this area, and hampered by lack of theory, it was deemed necessary before advancing to the stage of testing theoretically-derived hypotheses, to investigate just what kind of psychosocial characteristics these children bring to the situation. Guided solely, therefore, by limited data on the characteristics of these boys which were obtained the previous year, the following directional hypothesis was advanced: Boys who fail to complete the program have a more delinquent psychosocial profile than boys who complete the program

Procedures

Selected scales of the Jesness Inventory (Jesness, 1966) were administered (Value orientation, alienation, denial and occu-

pational aspiration) at the beginning of the program to 66 eleven-year-old boys who were enrolled in the 1971 National Summer Youth Sports Program, at a large southwestern state university. Measures of occupational aspiration were taken by categorizing responses to open-ended questions, in accordance with Hollingshead's (1957) Two-Factor-Index of Social Position scale..

A large proportion of this sample were either Mexican-American in origin, or black. These 66 Ss constituted the entire population of eleven-year-olds in the program (males).

Description of Jesness Inventory

The inventory was developed as part of a five-year research program on delinquency (Jesness, 1965), for the purpose of evaluating the effects of a treatment program for socially and emotionally disturbed children. Its major objective is to distinguish disturbed or delinquent children, from others. The complete scale measures, in addition to the dimensions mentioned earlier, social maladjustment, immaturity, autism, manifest aggression, withdrawal, social anxiety, repression.

Analysis of Data

The data were analyzed using an IBM 360-65 computer. Step-wise multiple discriminant analysis was performed to test the hypothesis that: Boys who fail to complete the program have a more delinquent psychosocial profile than boys who complete the program

Group 1, boys who completed the program, was composed of 27 Ss.

Group 2, boys who failed to complete the program, was composed of 39 Ss.

Results

Step-wise discriminant analysis yielded two functions which

correctly classified the first criterion group (Grou 1) by correctly predicting their characteristics with a 66% success rate. The second function classified members of the second group (Group 2) by correctly predicting their characteristics with a 70% success rate. In order of discrimination among the two profiles, the results were: value orientation, in which Group 2 members scored higher (higher scores are associated with rule-violating behavior and lack of responsibility); alienation, in which the same group scored higher (this variable is associated with feelings of powerlessness and alienation from the prevalent value system of the social order); denial, in which group 2 revealed that they were concerned and disturbed by intra-family conflicts; lower occupational aspirations (Group 2), focusing on such unskilled and semi-skilled jobs as janitor, mechanic, construction worker, etc. In contrast, several Group 1 members aspired in greater numbers to skilled "blue-collar" jobs, and several fell in the "white-collar" category.

Based on the above four variables, discriminant analysis yielded a generalized Mahalanobis D-Square of 23.19 (equivalent to X^2) which was found, with six degrees of freedom, to be significant beyond the .01 level of confidence. This lends support to the hypothesis that: Boys who fail to complete the program have a more delinquent psychosocial profile than boys who complete the program (see Tables 1 and 2)

Discussion of Results

The findings of this study appear to indicate that one answer to understanding the problem lies in the psychosocial characteristics of the participants. This, of course, is not an

TABLE 1: MAJOR DISCRIMINATING VARIABLES BETWEEN GROUP 1 (Completed program) AND GROUP 2 (Did not complete program)

Variables	Group 1 Mean	s	Group 2 Mean	s	Mahalanobis D-Square
1. Value Orientation	17.7	6.0	24.3	6.7	
2. Alienation	10.2	4.4	14.6	4.3	
3. Denial	11.4	3.8	9.8	2.8	
4. Occupational Aspiration	3.8*	1.7	4.7	1.1	23.19**

*Lower mean score indicates higher level of occupational aspiration

**Signficant beyond .01 level with 6 d.f.

TABLE 2: DISCRIMINANT FUNCTION WEIGHTS OF FOUR MAJOR VARIABLES

	Function 1	Function 2
1.	.79	.91
2.	1.15	1.32
3.	3.55	3.75
4.	2.92	3.24
Constant	-38.89	-46.83

entirely satisfactory answer, as it does not fully explain why some who should have completed the program did not, and vice versa. Is it possible, perhaps, that a delinquent disposition, interacting with the structure of the program could have produced the apparent discrepant distribution of results? Answers to this and other questions can, at best, be guessed at at this stage. However, there are theoretical indications, which the investigator feels are legitimate grounds for hypothesizing, that the great emphasis placed on team involvement (presumably for the purpose of stressing the development of such social skills as cooperation, group dependence, adherence to rules, etc.) in this program, and at most other institutions, may provide another part of the answer. It was noted earlier that boys who failed to complete the program were apt to indicate attitudes which are associated (according to Jesness, 1966) with "nonconforming, rule-violating behavior, lack of responsibility..." and alienation from the dominant values and norms of society. Thus, as team sports reflect essentially the social structure and culture, on a micro level, of the larger socio-cultural system (Luschen, 1967; Schafer, 1966; Yiannakis, 1974), it is not unreasonable to hypothesize that boys who are alienated and rebellious in the greater society should also feel alienated and rebellious in small scale "replicas" of the larger system, e.g. team sports.

The findings of this study raise fundamental questions regarding the role of sports as means for reaching individuals with delinquent tendencies. In view of the fact that the program is intended for boys and girls from lower socio-economic backgrounds and, to expand opportunities for disadvantaged youth,

it appears to be losing those who probably need this experience most. Can organized sports instruction, therefore, in the form of the National Summer Youth Sports Program be justified in terms of future commitments?

Recommendations

Guided by theoretical and empirical works on the effects of selected physical activities on various aspects of social and personality development (Clifford & Clifford, 1967; Cox, 1953; Doudlah, 1962; Harlow, 1951; Hellison, 1969; Hammett, 1967; Johnson, Fretz & Johnson, 1968; Kelly & Baer, 1969; Pyecha, 1970; Thune, 1949), it is suggested by this investigator that a program which is suitable to the needs of persons with delinquent tendencies could be devised. As team games may be too demanding in terms of adherence to rules, cooperation etc., activities which encourage individual achievement and success in individual and/or dual-type activities of low structural organization may be appropriate. Extrapolating further, it is suggested that such activities as weight training and body building, swimming, running, hiking, track and field, judo and karate, trampoline and tumbling, badminton and bowling may be most suitable.

Finally, it should be borne in mind that while these boys may have delinquent tendencies, they are by no means "hard-core" criminals. What is being recommended here is a "remedial" program for mildly disturbed boys who are, in most respects "normal".

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